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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, February 22nd, 1865.—Referred to
Committee on Military Affairs.

[By THE CHAIR.]

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT.

RICHMOND, VA., Feb. 20, 1865.

To the House of Representatives:

In response to your resolution of the 6th instant, I herewith transmit a communication from the Secretary of War, which conveys all the information in my possession relative to the non-destruction of the cotton in the city of Savannah, before its evacuation by our military forces.

JEFFERSON DAVIS.

COMMUNICATION FROM SECRETARY OF WAR.

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA, }
War Department, }
Richmond, Va., Feb. 18th, 1865. }

To the President of the Confederate States:

SIR:—I have received the following resolution of the House of Representatives of the 6th instant, referred by your Excellency to this Department:

“Resolved, That if not incompatible with the public interest, the President be respectfully requested to inform this House how it happened that the large amount of cotton was captured by the enemy at Savannah, in the face of the law of the Confederate States, passed as early as the 17th March, 1862, directing the military authorities to destroy cotton, or other property of any kind whatever, which may aid the enemy in the prosecution of the war, when necessary, to prevent the same, or any part thereof, from falling into the hands of the enemy.”

In response, I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy of a telegram received by the Adjutant General from Lieut. Genl. Har-

dee, in reply to a call made upon him for report why the cotton in Savannah was not destroyed before the evacuation of the city. This dispatch contains all the information on the subject in the possession of this Department.

Very respectfully,

Your obdt. servt.,

JOHN C. BRECKENRIDGE,
Secretary of War.

Received at Richmond, Virginia, Feb'y 7th, 1865 :

By Telegraph from Charleston, Feb'y 6th, 1865.

Gen. S. Cooper, A. & I. General:

Your dispatch of the 5th, inquiring why the cotton in Savannah was not destroyed before evacuation of the city, is received. The cotton was distributed throughout the city in cellars, garrets, and warehouses, where it could not have been burned without destroying the city. It had not been sent off by railroad previous to the cutting of road, because railroad transportation was monopolized for removal of Ordnance, Commissary, and other important Government stores. From the cutting of the roads to evacuation of the city—twelve days—every man was required to work on the lines, and every wagon, dray, and cart that could be impressed, was needed to keep the troops in a line (twelve miles long) supplied with Ordnance and Commissary stores. Not a man nor a woman could have been spared to collect the cotton in a place where it could have been burned.

(Signed,)

W. J. HARDEE,
Lt. General.

Official copy.

H. L. CLAY, *A. A. Gen.*

A. & I. G. O., Feb'y 14, 1865.

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